

BOUCHER ANNOUNCES APPROVAL OF FEDERAL BENEFITS FOR DISLOCATED WM COFFMAN EMPLOYEES

(Washington, D.C.) B U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that the workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the recent layoffs announced at WM Coffman in Marion will be eligible to receive federal Trade Readjustment Assistance, commonly known as

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TRA,

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from the U.S. Department of Labor. The benefits will assist secondarily affected workers with job retraining and health care premium payments.

Any worker who lost his or her job on or after April 7, 2009 is eligible to receive the TRA assistance.

The displaced workers will also be eligible for healthcare benefits through the Health Care Tax Credit which will provide laid off workers with 65 percent of the cost of health insurance premiums. The remaining 35 percent of premium cost will be paid by the employees.

The U.S. Department of Labor will provide job outreach services, career counseling, job search and job development assistance, classroom training (including adult basic education and GED completion) to those workers affected by the workforce reduction.

Other services which can be provided under Trade Readjustment Assistance include on-the-job training and transportation assistance.

In addition, Alternative Trade Act Assistance (ATAA) will be provided to those workers who qualify.

This federal assistance is of critical importance to the workers who have been affected by the layoffs at WM Coffman in Marion, @ Boucher said. These workers deserve our help, and some of the most important and meaningful services we can offer relate to training individuals for new jobs and assisting them in maintaining health insurance coverage for themselves and their families.

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Some employees may also be eligible to receive Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance. Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA) is a federal benefit program for workers over the age of 50 years who qualify for TRA benefits. In addition to the traditional TRA benefits, workers who qualify under the ATAA program are eligible for a federal subsidy of up to \$10,000 over a two-year period if a worker regains employment within 26 weeks of being dislocated from WM Coffman and if the new salary is less than \$50,000 and less than his or her former salary.

The provision of this federal assistance is an important step in assuring that the displaced workers have the training, health care premium payments and other benefits needed to find new employment, @ Boucher said.

Frequently, workers who lose their jobs find that they do not possess the skills necessary to compete effectively for employment in another field. The use of federal funds to provide the new skills and job placement services are wise investments which strengthen both the earning potential of the region =s residents and the base of the regional economy.

Boucher explained that the retraining and health care premium funding would be furnished by the U.S. Department of Labor under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, which provides assistance for workers who have lost their jobs due to foreign imports or plant relocations outside the United States. In addition to job retraining benefits, the program also provides up to 52 weeks of additional unemployment insurance benefits beyond the normal 26 weeks available to all workers who lose jobs. The additional assistance enables unemployed workers to continue searching for work or to continue participation in training programs.

Boucher said he is pleased that the Department of Labor acted positively to approve assistance for the displaced WM Coffman employees. **AI want to commend the Department of Labor for its response to this situation and for providing the funding necessary for job training and health insurance assistance to these deserving people,**
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he said.

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